

## Program Review Process Experiment, 2007-2009 Self-Study Proposal

<b>Academic Organization (Department):</b> Humanities + Religious Studies	<b>Academic Group (College):</b> Arts + Letters	<b>Date:</b> 12/18/07
<b>Department Chair:</b> Jackie Donath	<b>College Dean:</b> Jeffrey Mason	<b>Review Team Chair:</b> Amy Liv

### Self-Study Option

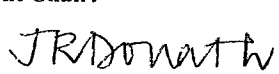
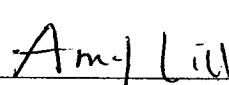
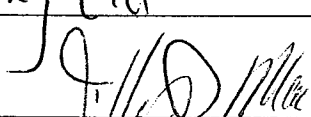

Option A

Option B

Option C

Hybrid of Options  (please provide brief description):

### Approval signatures:

<b>Department Chair:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 12/18/07
<b>Review Team Chair:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 12/17/07
<b>College Dean:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 12/19/07
<b>Associate Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 5/28/2008

Distributions: Academic Affairs (original), Department Chair, College Dean, Review Team Chair. Dean's office to send original after approval to Academic Affairs, at mail zip 6016.

Self-Study Proposal  
Department of Humanities and Religious Studies  
December 2007

The Department of Humanities and Religious Studies has decided to choose Option C: Focused Inquiry, as described on pp. 8-9 of the "Program Review Process Experiment" document as the model for its self-study.

Following the Option C format, our Self-Study will include three main sections:

I. "General information about the program, e.g., data on students, faculty, staff, facilities, etc. (most of which is supplied by Office of Institutional Research)"

The Office of Institutional Research has already provided the Department with a hardcopy of the relevant *Factbook* (also available electronically at the OIR website--- [www.oir.csus.edu](http://www.oir.csus.edu) ). The Department will contact OIR as our data needs become clearer during the self-study process.

II. "A statement of intended student learning outcomes at the program level; methods for assessing them, including the use of direct measures; assessment results to date; and documentation of the use of assessment results in efforts to achieve program improvement (assistance with the preparation of which is available from the University Assessment Coordinator)"

Our department adopted its current Assessment Plan in May, 2004. Since that time, while some of the plan's directives have been implemented, a number have not. Since 2004, the terrain of assessment at the University has shifted in both scale and importance. Our recent efforts to prepare assessment plans for GE Area C review revealed the scope of the task before us and the need to develop a more a manageable and meaningful system for evaluating our programs' educational effectiveness. Especially in light of the Program Review Process Experiment and the opportunities it affords to devote focused attention to assessment we plan to make significant improvement in this arena the primary task of this Self-Study. As a matter of fact, preparing for this process has already led the Department to refine its learning goals. We have also indentified sets of both general and discipline-specific learning goals (see Appendix). One of the tasks before us is to examine the overlaps and disconnects among these three statements of our programmatic intentions and to decide how to discover how well we are meeting this goals. We look forward to the advice offered through the rest of the Program Review process and welcome the opportunity to improve both our conceptualizations and our process of program assessment.

We certainly acknowledge the importance of the components of our program which are not attached to General Education—our three courses focused only on majors and our efforts in graduate education in the form of our administration of the Liberal Arts Master's Program and our collaboration with the Department of History on the History M.A. with concentration in Humanities. Our contribution to the HIST/HRS MA is not particularly significant in terms of departmental resources---few students choose that track in the HIST department; we don't offer special courses for those who do---we open our HRS and LIBA courses numbered above 200 to HIST/HRS students; and we think our activity in that program might be better included in the LIBA program study. Past practice (since we took on LIBA in the mid 1990s) has been to do a separate self study (on a different cycle) for that program—and we'd like to continue that for at least the next cycle, as we have some significant issues we'd like to focus on in that review.

III. "The results of a *focused* inquiry addressing issues of particular interest/concern to the program itself, in the context of what is currently important to the college and university." Closely related to our primary task of establishing an effective, meaningful assessment plan and a consistent process, the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies wishes to undertake a thorough curricular review, and to make plans for revisions as suggested in light of consideration of our mission statement and learning goals. As part of this review, we wish to examine a broad array of undergraduate humanities and/or religious studies programs across North America (the actual combining of both fields, as in our situation, is quite rare). In this regard, we are guided by paragraph C. of section I ("Program Introduction/History") of Option A:

What major state and national trends (new developments in theory, research, and pedagogy) are occurring in your discipline? How does your curriculum structure and course offerings compare to those of similar programs in your discipline? What responses to changes in the discipline is your department planning and/or implementing?

By way of responding to these questions, we plan to work towards identifying redundancies and deficiencies or gaps in our curriculum. This review should serve to define some parameters for the next stage of our ongoing examination of curriculum, as called for in Recommendations 5 and 6 of our 2002 Program Review:

5. The Department should reassess its curricular offerings to reduce similarity and possible duplication.
6. The Department should reassess the electives majors may take, i.e., the structure of the concentrations.

The Department's mission statement provides the basis of the focused inquiry we propose:

The Department of Humanities and Religious Studies has a vital two-fold mission within the University Community. First and foremost, through general education courses the Department provides the foundation for undergraduate students' historical and contemporary interdisciplinary understanding, appreciation of the arts, and development of tolerance and respect for diverse cultures and religious cultural systems. Second, within its undergraduate major, the Department strives to facilitate students' achievement of an historical and contextual understanding of changing perspectives on aesthetic and spiritual values, an historical, contextual and interdisciplinary understanding of diverse cultures and global religious systems.

Given our department's strong curricular emphasis on General Education, we wish to examine the alignment between our departmental learning goals and program objectives (see appendix below) and the GE Area C Learning Goals. Furthermore, we plan to expand this examination to include consideration of the University's Baccalaureate Learning Goals. The Department's mission and its commitment of resources reflect a relationship to the General Education Program, and to the University's goals of liberal learning, that is both fiscally and philosophically significant. We believe that focusing on GE Area C and considering the ramifications of our centrality to that component of the University's curriculum will lead us to ask and answer meaningful questions about the teaching and learning that characterizes our undergraduate programs.

Another major objective of this curricular review will be to continue improving our curriculum's ability to fulfill both our GE demands and to provide a quality HRS major. This objective, too, complies with recommendations (2 and 3) in our previous Program Review:

2. The Department should further differentiate major from non-major courses.
3. The Department should require prerequisite and/or recommended electives for identified upper division courses.

A specific task along these lines will be to continue to examine the efficacy of prescribing prerequisites for GE Area C4 courses.

The Department plans to complete the Self-Study by the end of the spring 2008 semester.

## APPENDIX: Departmental materials pertinent to this Self-Study proposal

### I/(Specific) Learning Objectives

1. Analytical reading and expository writing skills  
Students in HRS courses will develop and demonstrate the ability to examine complex issues and write about them in clear, purposeful analytical prose essays which summarize, evaluate, and integrate texts outside their own experience and use appropriate structure, development, usage, and reference sources.
2. Critical reasoning skills  
Students taking HRS courses will develop and demonstrate the ability to examine complex ideas and issues through evaluating evidence, making appropriate inferences, and understanding the relationships between premises and conclusions.
3. Formal analysis skills  
Students taking HRS courses will build on previous General Education courses in critical thinking to develop and demonstrate their ability to use critical reasoning skills and a variety of critical methodologies to formally analyze arts and humanities and religious systems and cultures within interdisciplinary, historical and cultural contexts.
4. Humanities appreciation  
Students taking HRS courses will be able to use a variety of critical methodologies to identify, systematically and insightfully analyze, and effectively communicate an understanding and appreciation of changing perspectives on beauty and spirituality.
5. Respect for cultural diversity  
Students taking HRS courses will demonstrate an appreciation of diverse cultures and will cultivate an attitude of tolerance and respect for cultures other than their own.
6. Understanding of global cultural and religious systems  
Students taking HRS courses will develop an historical/contextual understanding of various global cultural and religious systems.

### II/HRS Disciplinary Competencies [from 2002 Self-Study]

- Make meaningful comparisons among cognate forms and ideas in diverse societies
- Develop sophisticated understandings of historical epochs and contextualize the major expressive works and ideas of those epochs
- Engage in critical analysis of texts and identify central themes and concepts
- Display critical reasoning skills
- Awareness of theories of art
- Awareness of theories of religious experience
- Ability to write expository/analytical papers
- Command of standard English
- Demonstrate superior ability to articulate logically structured thesis
- Demonstrate superior reading skills—evidenced by retention of salient facts and key ideas
- Information literacy/computer skills

III/Departmental Teaching and Learning Goals [revised 10/2007]

- Development of cultural literacy within a global context
- Development of an empathetic understanding of human diversity within historical and cross-cultural contexts
- Understanding of the arts as expressions of social/philosophical values
- Understanding of the academic study of religion and knowledge of the world's religious traditions